The Seed Sower.

A Magazine for the Church, the School, and the Home.

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Longing.

Away from the city's herds!
Away from the noisy street!
Away from the storm of words,
Where hateful and hating meet.

Away from the vapour grey,
That like a boding ill
Is blotting the morning gay,
And gathers and darkens still!

Away from the stupid book!
For, like the fog's weary rest,
With anger dull it fills each nook
Of my aching and misty breast.

Over some shining shore
There hangeth a space of blue;
And parting mid thin clouds hoar
Where the sunlight is falling through.

The glad waves are kissing the shore;
Rejoice, and tell it for ever;
The boat glides on, while its oar
Is flashing out of the river.

Oh, to be there with thee!
Thou and I only, my love!
And sparkling sands and the sea!
And the sunshine of God above!

GEORGE MACDONALD.

The Renaissance of Wonder.

Religion begins in wonder and ends in ecstasy. Theology begins in analysis and ends in science. Religion is at worst a practical necessity. Theology is at best an intellectual convenience.

And this is only to say that Religion starts with miracle, that is, with something that is marvellous and adorable, like the birth of a Buddha, of a Christ, of our own child. Among the New Testament Apocryphal writings there is one story in particular that tells this truth in the only way that such a truth can be told, namely, by a poetic legend. When Joseph was on his way to Bethlehem, accompanied by the maid Mary, it came to pass that in a cave in the desert the Holy Child was born. There Joseph left the mother while he sought a mid-wife, and on the way he had a vision. In an instant the earth stood still; everything was transfixed with a world-amazement. Not a living creature—not even the bird on the wing—stirred. Every action remained unfinished, as though a brand of lightning should stand still in the heavens.

"And I, Joseph, was walking and was not walking; and I looked up into the sky and saw the sky astonished; and I looked up to the

pole of the heavens and saw it standing, and the birds of the air keeping still. And I looked down upon the earth and saw a trough lying and workpeople reclining; and their hands were in the trough. And those that were eating did not eat, . . . and those that were conveying anything to their mouth did not convey it; but the faces of all were looking upwards. And I saw the sheep walking, and the sheep stood still; and the shepherd raised his hand to strike them, and his hand remained up. And I looked upon the current of the river, and I saw the mouths of the kids resting on the water and not drinking, and all things in a moment were driven from their course."

A recent editor of these writings says gravely that this "is extravagant in the style of its description." It was not intended, I imagine, to be anything else. It expresses in the best available imagery how, at the birth of a religion, the Universe was breathlessly hushed; how the blue sky opened its great eye and stared. Some day, perhaps, a great artist may paint us Joseph's vision, and convey again, by picture, that sense of instantaneous magic and illusion which the words now give. They are an allegory of what happens when there is an emergence of a new and spontaneous humanity, or—what is really the same thing—a revival of religious faith. The first sign of its advent is wonder in the world. Men's flippant, rationalistic chatter is hushed; their face looks upwards, or they bow themselves down before an unintelligible mystery. What the mind cannot compass, what the brain cannot grasp, the heart learns to adore. In this sense, at least, the golden stories of miraculous births are true. They are only an exceptionally adequate account of what really took place.

It would be possible to show how, when Christianity dawned upon the world, scepticism and intellectual despair rendered some of the best minds incapable of discovering anything deeply worshipful in man. But scepticism had to give place to wonder, and with wonder appears a new worth in man. Scholars never tire of telling us that Christianity was well-timed. It came upon men as the thing they most needed. Mediæval thought repeats the allegory. The philosophers that surrounded Savonarola were a strange mixture of credulity and unbelief, but wonder, reasonable wonder, finally overcame them.

And, in another part of Europe, the spirit that seized Huss roused Luther to fury, and the old religion saw its Reformation. Again, the significant thing is that with the recovered sense of man's mystery and worth we have the Peasant's Rising and the enthusiasm for social reform. It is more difficult to read the signs of one's own day. We cannot see the forest for the trees. But I sometimes think that the refined infidelities of our cultured and wealthy classes, the beautiful preciosity of their lives mingling with gross materialisms — art and mammon and sensuality going hand in hand in a reeling triumphal procession—I sometimes think that these constitute one symptom of dying trust and fear. But there are others who claim to have their feet shod with the preparation of a new gospel. We have a new birth of wonder, and an awakened sense of mystery in Theosophy, Spiritualism, Christian Science, and all the bewildering cults of the Occult. These are not manifestations of the new awakenment that appeal strongly to me—except as excellent examples of the strong vengeance of the soul on an unbelieving and inhibiting intellect. Some forms of this mystical re-action are curiously suggestive of the cults of Isis and Serapis and Mithras that appeared in decadent Rome. But they are at least significant of the world-old unrest of heart. Even so small a thing as the revival of Celtic literature—not really a small thing at all—this new communion with woods and fairies and the everlasting stars—suggests a recovered sense of the nearness of the supernatural and the unfathomable greatness of man. It is not the ancient world that has changed, but that we are being moved by a fresh appreciation of the wonder and the value of it. The outward wizardry of the world overwhelms us precisely because in a deeper desert cave than that of legend, man in all his divinity is being born. Ethical Theism and political reform alike rest on the God-hood of man. No one has ever yet become agnostic or cynical through unbelief in God. He first becomes agnostic and cynical through unbelief in man,—in the divinity of man's nature. That is why scepticism will always speak as Tyndall, I think, once spoke, of human existence as a brief and

discreditable episode in the life of one of the meanest of planets. But religion, even questioning, doubting religion, stands before our common humanity, sees it in its already glorified and risen life, knows it in its immortality, and utters the amazed confession—"My Lord and my God." J. M. Lloyd Thomas.

Religion and Modern Life.

"Friend, go up higher."

Our sympathy runs out very quickly to the expression of strong feeling, so long as it is kept within certain bounds; but is quickly set back if it goes beyond those bounds. When I was in Italy, many years ago, I found that I was soon hardened to and irritated by the practised beggar's whine, which seemed very pitiful at first; while the cry of a beggar child, or the street singing of the blind, brought pain to my heart and tears to my eye in an instant. In one case the cry was, or seemed to be, sophisticated and unreal; in the other, the strongest appeal to pity was in the dumb appeal of that most sad and piteous fact, blindness and poverty, most likely unpitied and uncared for. So the high-wrought rhetorical expression of feeling makes what Aristotle calls a "frigid" style,—cold from contrast, as Whately explains, like an empty fireplace on a chilly day. Now in no direction does the ardent expression of feeling outrun our sympathy sooner, than when it sets toward piety: which is, itself, an emotion that many excellent people do not feel very strongly. And so the exposition of the higher life as a life of emotional piety gets unreal and dim; and is often, I fear, regarded at best with a good-humoured and tolerant contempt by many excellent people of the world.

Religion, again, has suffered incalculably from being left to the interpreting of ascetics, recluses, valetudinarians, and poltroons. It is a dangerous slope, said Maurice, from "the spiritual man" to the sneak. Consider what a robust, out-door, wholesome thing is the religion we find in the Old Testament,—in such types as Abraham, the emigrant Arab chieftain; in Samuel, the sternly upright and vigorous magistrate; in David, the shepherd-boy, the freebooter, the hardy adventurer, the self-willed, hot-tempered, magnanimous, capricious, jealous, vindictive king; in Isaiah, the king's counsellor, reckless in his passionate patriotism, sharp in his appeal to the popular conscience, the eloquent poet of a splendid future! What a loss and descent it is when we come down to modern pietists! None of those men were saints, or ever pretended or wished to be. Their religion was as natural a part of them as their delight of eye or ear, their wrath, or ambition, or pride; and it was what history has found worth preserving and remembering of them.

So, too, religion was worth respecting, and commanded worldly men's respect, in such men as the intrepid broad-hearted Luther; the patient, wary, courageous, and devoted Orange; the scheming, crafty, resolute, powerful Cromwell,—great forces, all of them, in times of great movement and change. Contrast with such men the puny and sentimental religionists who to common thought represent the name now. They may be more clean of heart and free from guile than those strong and valiant natures: there is no need to disparage either the genuineness of their sentiment, or the tender and sweet fidelity of their work. But their interpretation of the thing, taken alone, warps the great name of Religion into something effeminate and unwholesome. What can the gentle recluse really know of the height and depth of those mighty forces which move the world, acting through the lives of strong and courageous men? What can a conscience morbidly tender, or a mind scrupulously narrowed to a single view of the Divine life, known of those powerful currents that sweep their way through history, or of the higher Law written out in all organized life upon the globe? What can he who habitually cowers in dread of the awful Judge, whose justice he dare not question and whose penalties his heart whispers him he too well deserves,—what can such a one know of the freedom, joy, courage, of the higher life? Scarce any greater harm has been done to the name of Religion than to leave it to the expounding of such feeble-spirited and abject pietists as too often claim a monopoly of it.

A like mischief—possibly even worse—has

been done by putting the sphere of the higher life away from and outside of the present life. This cardinal error belongs alike to the pale ecclesiasticism of centuries ago, and to the timid epicureanism of modern days. It is wholly apart from the spirit and sense of the Bible it ignorantly appeals to—whose pages glow, wherever the Divine life is spoken of, with the glad light, and are braced with the conscious strength, and exult in the abounding freedom, of a spirit that comes from a higher source indeed, but makes the very joy and strength of this labour-laden and sorrow-laden life that men live here. If in some downcast mood, or under stress of argument, Paul did say once, "If in this life only we have hope we are of all men most miserable," that one lapse from his habit of cheerful courage might well be pardoned, the outward conditions of this life being then so merciless and hard. But there is no such reason to be given now by those who misquote his words. There is nothing of it in the Old Testament—where the times were just as rough but where all the gladness, strength, and hope of religion are for the actual here and now. And all that is strongest and sweetest in the New Testament, while it opens up the comforting vision of the glories of a world to come, at the same time glows and throbs with a present joy that is felt to be divine, and is linked in, naturally and continually, with the experience, the affection, the duty, of the present life. Religion in those souls was felt not as a theatrical illumination reserved for some far-off holiday; but as a kind of sunlight, which filled and brightened the whole horizon of men's natural life, as broadly as they could possibly feel or think or act.

What narrowness—ludicrous, if we would but think of it—has been incurred by our modern habit of ghostly interpretation! Because some fervidly enthusiastic Jew had gone out once in holiday procession to welcome his King with the waving of palm-branches and the singing of patriotic songs, to the sound of the best instrumental music of his day, and thought there could be nothing in heaven or earth so fine, and so composed an ardent "song of degrees" celebrating the event,—our children, at the end of two thousand or three thousand years, must be taught that Heaven is a place where they shall literally (if they are very good) play on golden harps, wave palm-branches, and sing psalms, to all eternity! till some poor child, in weariness at the thought of it, asks her mother, pitifully, if the Lord will not perhaps allow her, when she had been *very* good, to go away sometime to the other place, where she may play with the naughty children Saturdays! To think of the grotesque cruelty, the real mockery and mischief of this thing!

The fact is—the more distinctly we see it the better—that Heaven cannot possibly be anything else to us than the culminating and idealizing of what we honestly love best and care most for, here; Hell cannot possibly be anything else to us than the culminating and idealizing of what we honestly most dread and hate. The higher life and the lower, the highest life and the lowest, are thus intensely conceived as taking outward colour and form in the gates of pearl, the walls of porphyry and jasper, and the pure river of the water of life clear as crystal; as realized to the senses in the flames and anguish, the stench and darkness, the brimstone fumes and throngs of fiends, that make up the dreadful imagery of the Pit. It is a vivid, intense, descriptive poetry—a gorgeous and fiery phantasmagory—a poet's idealizing of Good and Evil in the most vast, sublime, comforting, overwhelming shapes.

If we compare the conditions of life now with those when that stupendous imagery was conceived, we are struck first of all by the immensely greater range of it in almost every direction, — particularly in the direction of knowledge, thought, and practical power; I might add, in visible splendour too. For example, it would have been impossible for an ancient Jew or early Christian, any more than for a Bulgarian peasant to-day, really to conceive a Paradise half so gorgeous as a Paris exposition, or an Omnipotence equal to the display in a Krupp's cannon-factory, or an Omnipresence equal to the electric telegraph, or an Omniscience to rival the actual attainments of modern knowledge. We have in such things as these as much grander a scale of measurement in the mental life, as in our modern astronomy we have of the outer spheres; and we are not going to accept those comforting words, those glorious symbols of

ancient faith, in any sense more narrow relatively to us than they had to those who first gave shape to them for our instruction, our warning, or our true peace.

It is the expanding, purifying, exalting, of what we *do* believe in and care for, not the painful effort to realize what we do not half believe in or care for at all, that is going to give back to the name of Religion its true honour among ourselves. I look about, to see where men find in reality that honest, sincere, and unselfish joy in living. And I find it not merely in the emotion, fellowship, living piety, and good works of professed religionists—though theirs is a sphere of life noblest and purest of all, which deserves its first place in our honour and desire. I find it also in the joy of widening Knowledge; in the joy of the discovery of Truth; in the joy of creative Art; in the joy of noble Music; in the joy of all earnest Work; in the joy of all higher Contemplation; in the stern joy of all strenuous Combat; in the pure deep joy of all heroic Sacrifice. These all make part of the higher life of man. And not till Religion generously welcomes and enfolds them all, can her name receive the cordial honour, or her promises win the desire or gratitude, of such hearts as those which beat around us now.

I say, "unselfish joy." It is quite too late, and the world has learned quite too much of the conditions of right living, to fall back like the old nature-religions or anything sensual, base, or cruel. Into that higher life can be admitted (in the words of the Apocalypse) "nothing that is cowardly, or distrustful, or abominable, or idolatrous, or unclean, or that loveth and maketh a lie." All such "have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" — whatever that may be—"which is the second death." Morality does not constitute religion: very far indeed from that. But morality lays down, with severe exactness, the foundation on which alone that higher life can rest. Morality prescribes, with sharp emphasis, that rule of conduct which is the only pass-word into the Celestial City.

Here is the difference between our notion of the higher life and the thoughtless, gay, unmoral religions of Pagan antiquity: whose ideal was the complete training, perfecting, developing of "the natural man;" a worship of intellect and beauty, which descended to a riot of sense and lust and cruelty and greed. Christianity, with all its errors and the narrow understanding of its disciples, did set up a lasting barrier against that loose and lewd interpretation. It made, once for all, self-devotion and purity of heart a part of our ideal of human life; a part of our conception of the Eternal life. It was necessary, perhaps, that that ideal, religiously conceived, should be partial, narrow, ghostly, other-worldly, for a season; since, in the tempest of human passion, it is more important that one shrine should be kept sacred and pure, however secluded, than that the better life should be spread out all at once, so widely and so thinly too as all to be presently dissolved away.

That was necessary. But it is necessary, too that in the vastly enlarged wealth, power, beauty, and in the wider humanities, of our modern life, those partialities, narrownesses, asceticisms, should be done away; that Religion should be as real and vital a thing to us, with the vast spaces of our sky and the developed riches of our earth, as it was to those whose notion of the Lord's kingdom would be included in one of our counties, and whose dream of the splendours of Paradise would be out-matched by the wealth of a single city. Their limitations of thought can no longer confine and limit us. Let only the fervour, strength, and purity of their spirit guide and inspire our own aspiration to the Eternal Life! J. H. ALLEN.

Thanksgiving.

Happy in Thy dear love am I,
O, Father, who art ever nigh;
Thanks be to Thee and sweetest praise,
For Thy great goodness all my days.

For years of life that Thou hast given,
Guiding my pilgrim soul to heaven—
For constant faith in daily strife,
With passion and the ills of life.

My thankful heart is bright with prayer;
Keep me, O keep me, in Thy care.
I would be ever Thy dear son,
And hear at last Thy glad "Well done."

NEANDER ANDERTON.

Is Precocity a Sign of Disease?

(Continued.)

What is the explanation? The old one, of course, is that the man of genius possesses a "gift," a new and special faculty given him by the will of God, which may, of course, be given to a baby as well as to a mature man. This, though the form of the belief now annoys men of science, must be in some sense true; but then, it is also true of every faculty. We elevate men of genius a little too much when we suppose them subjects of miracle, more especially as the advantage of precocity, either to the man himself or to the world, is so distinctly dubious. Mendelssohn might have been as great a musician had he begun as late as Wagner, who as a boy disliked music; and there is no instance that we can recall of a precocious child having, as a child, added anything of the slightest moment to the world's intellectual wealth. There has been no loss of time, so to speak, through waiting. Heredity as an explanation is insufficient, for though genius has occasionally been hereditary—*e.g.*, David and Solomon, or Coleridge and Hartley Coleridge—there seems no reason why, if transmissible, it should not be more frequently transmitted, or why it should not be transmitted, as ability is, through long-descending generations. The instances of its transmission even to children are so infrequent as to be perfectly explicable on the theory of chances; while of its transmission through a long line, there is, we believe, no instance whatever upon record. We should have, if the poetic faculty descended, a line of poets as long as that of any king; and we have nothing of the kind, nor, so far as we know, any instance of a family lasting, say, for five hundred years, with even a specialty akin to genius distinctly perceptible in its members. The nearest approach to that is the musical susceptibility which Lord Beaconsfield attributes to the Jews, which is, no doubt, decided, and which has lasted for more than three thousand years. It is not, however, universal enough among Jews to be a sufficient proof of the fuller doctrine of heredity, all we can say of it being that it creates an antecedent probability that the next composer who appears, or executant who is entirely original, will be a Jew, a probability, that is, greater than the numbers of the race would justify. Mr. Sully's explanation is more probable than this. He is inclined to believe that the man of genius possesses from birth a finer brain than his fellows, just as another man may possess a finer constitution, or a higher capacity for seeing and hearing at a distance. Men are certainly born not only with a special vitality which keeps them alive beyond the average duration of life, but with a special freedom from weak places which gives them an otherwise inexplicable capacity for endurance. A fine brain is as natural a circumstance as a fine physique, and it is quite possible that such a possession may be a condition of precocity—a decision which, if it is well founded, is curiously opposed to the popular and exceedingly ancient belief that precocity arises rather from disease than health. That solution, however, though it will comfort many an anxious mother, hardly meets the proved facts about calculating-boys, or the long-observed truth that special capacity in childhood frequently dies away. Why should a specially fine brain lose its fineness? Is it not possible—we are not offering a theory, but asking a question—that precocity arises not from some difference in the brain, but from some difference in the vigour, and therefore the early development of the life within the brain; that the disparity is in the motor, of which we know nothing, and not in the thing moved? Put it in the materialising way, and may not the difference be not in the collodion, but in the fluid which makes it act? There is some connection somewhere between the phenomena of precocity and of late development which has never been worked out yet. It seems wonderful that any child, however trained, should play well at five, or paint portraits at ten; but is it more wonderful than that a man over thirty should discover in himself a faculty he had never suspected? Yet that seems to have happened to Defoe, Cervantes, Sebastian Bach, and Haydn. The power might have been always there, but the something that vitalised was wanting. May there not be, that is, a thousand boys in the musical constitution among whom the box is opened early only in one, but might under certain conditions have been opened early in all?"

E. B.

Seed Corn.

FROM ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Every man has a sane spot somewhere.

It is with the best only that one captures a heart.

It always warms a man to see a woman brave.

There never was an ill thing made better by meddling.

If your morals make you dreary depend upon it they are wrong.

A man dissatisfied with endeavour is a man tempted to sadness.

To become what we are capable of becoming is the only end in life.

Some strand of our own misdoing is involved in every quarrel.

A happy man or woman is a better thing to find than a five-pound note.

The man who cannot forgive any mortal thing is a green hand in life.

It is deadly commonplace, but, after all, the commonplaces are the great poetic truths.

He that will pass judgment on the records of our life is the same that formed us in our frailty.

It is a poor heart and a poorer age, that cannot accept the conditions of life with some heroic readiness.

An aim in life is the only fortune worth the finding; and it is not to be found in foreign lands, but in the heart itself.

We had needs invent heaven if it had not been revealed to us; there are some things that fall so bitterly ill on this side time!

To do anything because others do it, and not because the thing is good, or kind, or honest in its own right, is to resign all moral control and captaincy upon yourself, and go post haste to the devil with the greater number.

An aspiration is a joy for ever, a possession as solid as a landed estate, a fortune which we can never exhaust, and which gives us year by year a revenue of pleasurable activity. To have many of these is to be spiritually rich.

There is an idea abroad among moral people that they should make their neighbours good. One person I have to make good: myself. But my duty to my neighbour is much more nearly expressed by saying that I have to make him happy.

And methought the beauty and terror are only one, not two;
And the world has room for love and death, and thunder and dew;
And all the sinews of hell slumber in summer air;
And the face of God is a rock, but the face of the rock is fair.
Beneficent streams of tears flow at the finger of pain;
And out of the cloud that unites, beneficent rivers of rain.

For still the Lord is Lord of might,
In deeds, in deeds, He takes delight;
The plough, the spear, the laden barks,
The field, the founded city marks.
He marks the smiler of the streets,
The singer upon garden seats;
He sees the climber in the rocks:
To him the sheepfold folds his flocks.
For those He loves that underprop
With daily virtues Heaven's top,
And bear the falling sky with ease,
Unfrowning caryatides.
Those he approves that ply the trade,
That rock the child, that wed the maid,
That with weak virtues, weaker hands,
Sow gladness on the peopled lands,
And still with laughter, song, and shout,
Spin the great wheel of earth about.

ISAAC WATTS.
From a Painting (about 1714) in Dr. Williams' Library.

Our Hymn Writers.

I.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748).

Isaac Watts, one of the earliest and by far the most popular hymn writer among orthodox Nonconformists, was born at Southampton in 1674. It was in the dark days after the passing of the Act of Uniformity, and Watts's father twice suffered imprisonment as a Dissenter and for frequenting Dissenting conventicles. So when in later years a rich and generous person who had become acquainted with young Isaac's abilities offered to send him to Oxford or Cambridge if he would give up his Noncomformity, he at once declined the offer, saying that he was "determined to take his lot among the Dissenters."

Watts "lisped in numbers" and began to write hymns for church use at the age of twenty. Coming home from chapel one day he expressed the opinion that the Psalmody did not possess the dignity and beauty that Christian worship ought to have. His father challenged him to write something better if he could. He immediately began, and continued hymn-writing for many years, publishing in all some 700 more or less original compositions. For more than 100 years these were almost the only hymns sung in Independent Chapels, and they formed the bulk of all other Evangelical psalmody. As was to be expected in such a large number, the hymns are of very unequal merit, some of them scarcely rising above pious doggerel, while others are marked by bold, quaint, or extravagant expressions which make their use in modern times impossible. In fact only a score or so can be found in the books published within the last generation. Hunter's "Hymns of Faith and Duty," has nine; Horder's "Treasury of Hymns," twenty-six; and while Dr. Martineau's "Hymns of Praise and Prayer," published thirty years ago, contain forty-nine, the "Essex Hall Hymnal" has only seven. But Watts will never die, and a few of his hymns are among the best in our language, and find a place in the Psalmody of every church in our midst. High Church and Low Church, Baptist and Unitarian, alike find in "O God, our help in ages past," the most fitting metrical expression of the feelings of our common humanity when death takes from us the good and great. Evangelical religion has no more pathetic hymn than "When I survey the wondrous Cross." "Up to the hills I lift mine eyes" will always be a favourite with souls looking to heaven for guidance, while few nature hymns are at once more delightfully simple or singable than "I sing the Almighty power of God;" and if the first line of "Before Jehovah's awful throne" strikes a chord a little out of touch with the feeling of to-day the rest of the hymn is at once so majestic and melodious that it will retain its hold upon the worshipping church for many a year to come.

But Watts was not only a hymn-writer. A learned and scholarly man he published grave books on *Logic*, *Astronomy*, the *Freedom of the Will*, the *Logos of St. John*, and a popular little treatise on *The Improvement of the Mind*. Owing to ill-health he had to live much in retirement, and having the most devoted friends he never lacked care, help and sympathy. He became so widely known through his writings (his *Logic*, a text-book at Oxford for many years) that the Universities of Glasgow and Aberdeen conferred on him the degree of D.D.

He ministered to an Independent Church in London for about ten years, and then found a home for the rest of his life in the household of Sir Thomas Abney.

National Conference Guilds' Union.

GUILD READING CIRCLES.

The Prize Essay Scheme arranged by the National Conference Guilds' Union has recently reported the results of its second annual competition, and will shortly announce its third programme. Of this scheme many Guild members have taken advantage, but many others, for various reasons, have refrained from writing essays on the prescribed subjects.

The Council have therefore decided, on the suggestion of the Rev. Frank K. Freeston, to also recommend the formation of GUILD READING CIRCLES for the study of selected books, apart from the writing of essays or the competition for prizes.

The aim of this further scheme is to encourage amongst all Guild members the regular practice of reading good books, and also to direct this reading definitely upon our Church Principles and our Guild Ideals.

It is hoped that all the Guilds in the Union will give this plan their earnest consideration and co-operation, and that every Guild member will now be able to join either the essay scheme or the reading circle.

BOOK LIST.

The following books are proposed as a first list, one of which may be read between October and Christmas, a second between Christmas and Easter, and a third between Easter and the Summer.

FREE CHURCH HISTORY.

"From the Restoration to the Revolution." By the Rev. John Brown, D.D. (Eras of Nonconformity. Thomas Law, Memorial Hall, London, E.C., 1s. 6d.), 1s. 2d.*

RELIGIOUS BIOGRAPHY.

"Life of Emerson." By Richard Garnett, L.L.D. (Great Writers. Walter Scott, London, E.C., 1s. 6d.) 1s. 2d.

THE RELIGIOUS LIFE.

"God and the Soul." By the Rev. R. A. Armstrong, B.A., Essex Hall. Cheap edition, 6d.

HOW TO FORM A CIRCLE.

Read this notice to the next Guild Meeting.
Pass a resolution that a Reading Circle be formed.
Elect a Leader to take the Circle in hand.
Appoint dates and place of meetings.
Take names of those who wish to be members.
Order the books from the local bookseller.

* A portfolio of portraits, prints and documents, illustrating this volume may be borrowed gratis from the Rev. Frank K. Freeston, Essex House, Campden Hill, London, W.

Notes and Jottings.

The general public had almost lost sight of the case of the Free Church of Scotland which was pending before the supreme Court of Appeal. Now the verdict has come with almost dramatic swiftness, and we are all left wondering what is to be the result of a decision which is probably as legally correct as it is strange to common sense. The whole of the property of the Free Church of Scotland has been handed over to an insignificant minority, and the living Church stands dispossessed by its own action of its patrimony, crippled for effective action by the dead hand of the past, just as it was reaching forward to fresh and more vigorous life.

Before these notes are in the hands of our readers some wise way of compromise may have been devised, but in any case the situation is full of menace to the religious life of Scotland, and has provoked already much searching of heart. There is a general conviction that some solution must be found, and that it is contrary to public policy to ignore continuity of life in the interests of doctrinal identity. This was recognized in the very able judgment of Lord Macnaghton, whose dissent from the opinion of the majority of the Lords of Appeal was based largely upon his insight into the nature of a Church as a living organism with an inherent power of development. It is simply because it holds property, and for this purpose requires the protection of the State, and not because it has been unfaithful to its spiritual heritage, that the vast majority of the congregations of the Free Church of Scotland are threatened with spoliation. The Law has declared itself on the side of the dead branch.

If relief is sought in a special Act of Parliament it is to be hoped that it will be made wide enough to cover similar cases in the future. The recent decision should call attention to the value of open trusts in the case of new property, or at least to the duty of avoiding narrow doctrinal terms which cripple growth and encourage reaction. Meanwhile the pedant and the sectary have received distinct encouragement, and we are likely to see some

increased activity in many quarters of the narrow officious spirit which lays stress upon musty trust deeds and the literal interpretation of ancient forms and is quite blind to the living movements of religion. Men of this kind are to be found in every church, and it is clearly contrary to public policy that they should be allowed to get the upper hand. The State, by its inherent power of growth, is continually pronouncing certain legal obligations to be obsolete. Laws are not repealed, but they simply cease to exist because they have no meaning for life. In spite of the lawyers every Church, simply because it is an organism, must claim to exercise the same right.

Ecclesiastical affairs in France have reached a very interesting stage. The relations between the Government and the Vatican are more than strained, and it looks as though the Concordat may be torn in pieces. It is perhaps rash to prophecy, but we doubt whether either side will allow the dispute to go quite so far. The Catholic Church in France is not a State Church, but it is a Stipendiary Church, and in return for financial aid it acknowledges a sort of dual control. If the grant from the exchequer were withdrawn the Church would become at once a vast voluntary organization, as it is for instance in Ireland, and the financial pressure upon it would be very severe,— more severe than in Ireland, because there would be no commutation. On the other hand it would hardly be good policy to drive the Church into open antagonism to the State. Her hold upon large sections of the population is still very strong; in France, as elsewhere, even when the creed has gone, scepticism is powerless against sentimental attachments; and a vast association free from public control might easily develop into a political danger, as it would be certainly contrary to French ideas of government. The Concordat gives a real though limited control, and this the Republic, from its own point of view, would not be wise to surrender.

Regrets at Dr. Hunter's resignation of the pulpit of the King's Weigh-House Chapel are not confined to a narrow circle. He goes, evidently with a certain feeling of disappointment, with his London experiment, to take up his old work in Glasgow. But the little group of strong Liberal preachers in the metropolis will be much weaker for his departure. A sentence in a letter of farewell to his congregation expresses the aim of his ministry admirably. "It has been the dream of my life," he says, "to build up a Church free and comprehensive enough to give an honest welcome to all disciples of Jesus Christ —a Church simply Christian and nothing more." Dr. Hunter is not alone in his dream, and we are glad to welcome him as a noble ally on this truly Broad Church basis. The mood of the moment, with ourselves as with others, may be for party flags and denominational labels, but the future of liberal religion is in the hands of men of larger hopes and more distant vision.

The reprint of Mark Rutherford's Works in shilling volumes is very welcome. The volumes are printed in good type and well bound, and in this form a new generation of readers will be able to enjoy his excellent English, his power of discovering character, and above all his sympathy with common-place people, his insight into their difficulties, and his success in investing them with tragic significance. Another volume to which we are glad to call attention is "Newman," by Dr. William Barry. It derives part of its interest from the fact that it is written by a Roman Catholic, and is thus happily free from the insular Anglican point of view. Perhaps, however, its chief claim upon our attention is that it treats the great master of prose not so much as a theologian, but as a man of letters. Of course Dr. Barry finds it impossible to separate the two, and Newman, with his lofty absorption in religion, would have disdained the idea of being considered a literary artist. To literary fame he was at all times indifferent. Perhaps this is in part the secret of his matchless simplicity of style. His world of thought was too real and in a sense too impersonal for mannerisms.

We can all be angry with our neighbour; what we want is to be shewn not his defects, of which we are too conscious, but his merits, to which we are too blind.

Life's Positives.

[The following article, so full of wisdom and suggestiveness, appeared in *The Christian World* of July 28th, and is reprinted for the benefit of our readers. It is by the well-known writer, "J. B.," than whom our age has no more inspiring teacher.]

There are times when most of us are inclined to cry out against the positive. There seems too much of it. Our neighbour carries a whole cargo of opinions which he is anxious to unload upon us. Every street corner has its church or chapel which shouts its affirmation at us,—a whole string of affirmations. We travel to the ends of the earth, only to find the same thing. The present writer remembers the sensation with which, on sailing up the Dardanelles, he caught sight for the first time of the Mohammedan minarets which proclaimed him a Giaour, an infidel. It was with a similar consciousness that, in standing at the tomb of the apostles in St. Peter's, he suddenly called to mind that the church he was in, like the Turkish mosque, disposed in the same uncompromising manner of his future. We are all damned at least half-a-dozen times by the faiths we do not accept. Pondering these things the feeling, we say, comes over us that the thing has been a little overdone, and we are disposed to ask whether humanity might not, to the general advantage, stay its lust of affirmation and give its infallibility a rest. In such moods we fall in love with the undefined, and are disposed to say with Chamfort, "Il faut agir davantage, penser moins, et ne pas se regarder vivre." "Let us do more, think less, and not peer too closely into the business of living."

But is this really the conclusion of the matter? A nearer look into things shows us that, on the contrary, it is only a mood, an idea to be caressed a moment, and then put aside for what it is worth. While talk of this kind has a certain ground, it amounts neither to the condemnation of the positive, nor to the suggestion of a substitute for it. Granted that man has here pushed matters to excess, that his creeds are often a burden rather than a help, that his propositions are continually having to be revised or withdrawn; this does not prevent us from realising, on a deeper view, that in following this line he has, after all, not been mistaken, that his positive is really founded upon the general scheme of things.

Man makes his proposition, for one thing, by a necessity of his nature, and, for another, because he finds that Nature, before him, has already made hers. Life itself is crammed with the positive. Thoreau, in decrying the creeds, says somewhere that "the perfect God in His revelations of himself has never got to the length of one such proposition as you His prophets state." We say, in reply, that the nature of things has made propositions and of a most startling kind. Is not the universe itself, as we find it, really a most extraordinary proposition? Whoever antecedently would have imagined a thing like this? That the cosmos should be so and no other is a puzzle beyond words. Mr. Picton, in his book, "The Religion of the Universe," tells of a little girl who asked what he describes as the most comprehensive question ever addressed to him: "Sir, please tell me why there was ever anything at all?" Exactly. That there is anything at all, and that the thing is such as we see, is, we repeat, the most tremendous of declarations. Here have you a reverberating, full-throated "yes," against which all the "noes" and negatives fight in vain.

And the cosmos, in its entirety so immense a positive, carries the element into every detail. There is a profound remark of Schopenhauer to the effect that what we call the quality of an object is as great a mystery as the soul of a man. Even a perfume is an affirmation. That it should be this one thing out of all the million possibles, that it should be cut off by being just this from being all other, is in itself a wonder and a parable. Its assertion, like our own, is a limited one; it becomes narrowed down to almost nothing in making it; and yet life would be so much less rich without it! You too, my brother, in standing for some one thing, are cut off from that dozen other things you might be. Yet your "one" is wanted, and the cosmos were incomplete were it not there.

But the "nature of things" carries us much further than this in its insistance on the positive. It will not have our undefined at any price. It insists on committing us to this or that. Take a girl who has received an offer of marriage. In the tumult of her emotions she

asks herself whether what she feels is really love or only a semblance. There are doubts, and who shall resolve them? She finds there is no supernatural revelation to her on the subject; her friends cannot inform her; she possesses no psychological code that can furnish authoritatively the answer. In these circumstances surely the proper thing is to remain uncommitted! "Let us live on our doubt and do nothing!" But the world, our maiden discovers, has not been built that way. By the sheer force of life's fact there before her, she is compelled to make up her mind. Her doubt will not serve. There must be here, sooner or later, a "yes" or "no," with all her fate hanging upon it. A thousand similar illustrations from practical life tell the same story. Nature insists that we shall be positive. She screws out of us our affirmation whether we will or no.

As we look further we discover how the law of man's moral progress compels him in the same direction. He must lay down his scheme in order that his soul may live. His doctrine precedes his life and is formative of it. It is as if a climber should throw a rope with a grappling iron to the crag above him and mount by that. Out of his innermost self man is ever projecting a something, a doctrine, an ideal, beyond his present level, which then becomes the goal of his striving. His religions are his ideal life—beyond his actual, yet helping to the final attainment Wernle has a suggestive passage on this point in relation to early Christianity. Says he: "From the very first there was a sharp distinction between the Christianity that was actually lived in the Churches, and the Christianity which the teachers of the Church postulated in their writings. That which is called worldliness did not make its way into Christianity through decay from some high level of excellence. It came through the mission itself, as each new convert brought in a portion of the world along with him."

Another of nature's hints here is in the authority and life-giving force with which she endows the expounders of the positive. A mysterious magnetism belongs to the man who with conviction affirms something. You may state negations in the most elegant and classic style. You state them and nothing happens. But let our prophet come, with a new mandate for the soul upon his lips, and though his word be in the dialect of a Galilean peasant, the whole world is changed. Here, indeed, is Nature's grandest positive, her man with a message. Men bow before Christ's religious imperative, because they feel that the Infinite is behind and in it. When He offers redemption, forgiveness, peace, joy, Divine empowerment, as gifts from His own spiritual wealth, they see that these things do actually belong to the inner universe, that they are attainable in the consciousness even as they formed part of Christ's own consciousness. Christianity is thus the highest positive of the spiritual life.

But where are we now? Does this line of argument lead us then to the din of the sects as its necessary consequence? Are we, in the name of the positive, to accept all the old creeds and all the new ones; to fall down, then, before the latest theological adventurer who has a novelty to offer? Modern inquiry, looking the clarified eyes back on the long history of the past, is finding the answer to these questions. Nature, we find, will have her positive, even though the quality of it to begin with be of the poorest. She makes her man say "yes," even when his "yes" is half-full of error. But she never stops with that. Speedily to that too narrow affirmative comes the opposing negative, and the two wrestle with each other, till out of the conflict emerges, not destruction, but a new affirmative wider than that old one, wider also than its negative, containing in itself the truth of both. Man must, we say, have his positive, but he is on the way to ever better and richer ones.

Note as illustration of this what we are now learning about the true position of Christianity as a world teaching. When this new positive appeared the cultured classes opposed it as the example of all that was narrow, vulgar and, in the worst sense, exclusive. We remember the "*exitiabilis superstitio*" of Tacitus, the sneers of a Lucian and a Julian. And there have not been lacking Christian exponents of a later date whose interpretation offers abundant ground for these criticisms. But we are beginning to realise now how the Christian faith, properly viewed, justifies its position as a natural, inevitable part of the world's order. It is the culmination of a spiritual evolution, which has

been as sure in its operation as that which works in a nebula or in a coal bed. It is most noteworthy here how the early Christian writers had glimpses of this, denied to many later ones. They saw how the Gospel fitted into the wider revelation of which all were partakers. Justin Martyr recalls the teaching of Empedocles, Pythagoras, Plato and Socrates as illustrating the Christian Eschatology; while Lactantius opens his "Institutes" with the argument that a belief in Divine Providence was the common property of all religions. The Alexandrian fathers were full of this doctrine; it is continually emerging, indeed, in the great Christian literature. What we now realise is that the Christian consciousness is, with an important reservation, part of the universal human religious consciousness. With a reservation, we say. For this universal is also a particular. As Sabatier has finely put it: "The Christian consciousness is not merely an accidental form or part of the general religious consciousness. It is a necessary and dominant part of it. . . . It is with the first term of this ideal as with the summit of a mountain. The summit is a part of the mountain, but it dominates all the other parts in their ascending stages from the depths of the valley to itself, and by that fact it embraces them all and assigns to each its place and rank in the whole."

A grasp of this theme should help the modern man through many perplexities. It should enable him for one thing to sympathise with his neighbour's positive, though it be at present repugnant to his own. Do not despise that other assertion, church, institution that seems opposed to yours! It, too, is needed to complete the final positive. The topic here, too, becomes rudely personal. To that final you too, my brother, have to make your contribution. Life expects your vote also. You are to stand for something.

The hours as they glide by seem at once an offer and an expectation. Time is in itself formless, in order that we may make of it everything or nothing. To a deep soul there is naught so awe-inspiring as this speechless appeal. All the past, its heroisms, its sacrifices, its crimes, its victories, are the positives that our fellows have created in response to this same offer. And here is to day, silently waiting for us! It is ready to take all we have—our imagination, our industry, our learning, our love, our prayer—and weave it upon its loom. Or we may hand it nothing and let it pass, formless as it came. That we have this day, out of all the eternities, to make or mar by our positive or negative, is the most portentous present fact in the universe for you and me.

Calvin's Evening Prayer.

To most of the readers of the *Seed Sower*, Calvin's is a name to shudder at. We associate it with a hard, narrow, and intolerant theology, and with the persecuting temper of the bigot. Yet John Calvin was on the whole the keenest intellect of the Reformation, and his services to political liberty can hardly be over-rated. Bigot as he was, no one can doubt the fervour and genuineness of his piety. Stern and rugged in his theology, in his devotions he exhibits a very different side of his nature, simple, reverent, tender and humane. If it is delightful, as it should be, to find in men from whom we strongly differ, elements to admire, then our readers will be glad to make acquaintance with Calvin by his prayers. When allowance is made for a theological expression here and there peculiar to his age, his prayers are found to be of singular beauty. It will be difficult to find an evening prayer in which suggestion of night and darkness are treated with more delicacy of feeling, or more happiness of language, than the following, which he wrote for the Liturgy of the Dutch Reformed Church:

THE EVENING PRAYER.

Consider and hear me, O Lord; lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.

I will both lay me down in peace and sleep; for thou Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety.

O merciful God! Eternal light, shining in darkness, thou who dispellest the night of sin, and all blindness of heart: since thou hast appointed the night for rest, and the day for labour; we beseech thee, grant that our bodies may rest in peace and quietness, that afterwards they may be able to endure the labour they must bear. Temper our sleep, that it be not disorderly, that we may remain spotless both in body and soul; yea, that our sleep itself may be to thy glory. Enlighten the eyes of our understanding, that we may not sleep in death; but always look for deliverance from this misery. Defend us against all assaults of the devil, and take us into thine holy protection. And although we have not passed

this day without greatly sinning against thee, we beseech thee to hide our sins with thy mercy, as thou hidest all things on earth with the darkness of the night, that we may not be cast out from thy presence. Relieve and comfort all those who are afflicted or distressed, in mind, body, or estate: Through Jesus Christ our Lord; who hath taught us to pray—Our Father, &c.

The interest with which we regard this beautiful prayer is increased when we remember that it was the last prayer recited by John Knox on his death-bed. In McCree's life of this illustrious Scot we read: "At ten o'clock, they read the Evening Prayer, which they had delayed beyond the usual hour, from an apprehension that he was asleep. After this exercise was concluded, Dr. Preston asked him if had heard the prayers. 'Would to God,' said he, 'that you and all men had heard them as I have heard them; I praise God for that heavenly sound.' The doctor rose up, and Kinyeancleugh sat down before his bed. About eleven o'clock, he gave a deep sigh, and said, "Now it is come.' Bannatyne immediately drew near, and desired him to think upon those comfortable promises of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which he had so often declared to others; and, perceiving that he was speechless, requested him to give them a sign that he heard them, and died in peace. Upon this he lifted up one of his hands, and sighing twice, expired without a struggle."

G. F. Watts.

(IN ADDITION.)*

Mr. Bateman, in his little volume on the artist, tells us that Mr. Watts remarked to him that his pictures in the Tate Gallery were "symbolical and for all time. Their symbolism is, however, more suggestive than worked out in any detail. I want to make people think. My idea is the Book of Ecclesiastes with a higher impulse. Probably 'Love and Life' best portrays my message to the age." To him the passion for wealth, characteristic of the time, the growth of the Drink curse, and the spread of Gambling, which in its effects he regarded as "worse even than drink—the one vice for which Nature offers no excuse"—were horrible, and he expressed this feeling with his brush in "Mammon" and "The Minotaur."

* See *The Seed Sower* for July.

Here is Mr. Chesterton's account of what an intelligent man would say about Watts's awful presentation of Mammon:—"This is something which in spirit and in essence I have seen before. That bloated, unconscious face, so heavy, so violent, so wicked, so innocent, have I not seen it at street corners, in billiard rooms, in saloon bars, laying down the law about Chartered shares, or gaping at jokes about women? Those huge and smashing limbs, so weighty, so silly, so powerless and yet so powerful, have I not seen them in the pompous movements, the morbid health of the prosperous in great cities? The hard, straight pillars of that throne, have I not seen them in the hard, straight, hideous tiers of modern warehouses and factories? That tawny and sulky smoke, have I not seen it going up to heaven from all the cities of the coming world? Sitting upon his magnificent seat, he lets his heavy hands and feet fall, on the naked and godlike figures of the young, men and women. And this all destroying god and king is adorned *with the ear of an ass*, declaring that while he is royal and irresistible, he is also, when all is said, imbecile."

Mr. Harold Begbie, in a recent number of the *Pall Mall Magazine*, gave the following pen-portrait of Mr. Watts:—"A small, spare man, with crimson skull-cap, the face tapering from the broad brow to the point of his white beard, the black, mobile eyebrows restless above the smiling eyes, the head bent slightly forward from the slender neck. He was dressed in a long coat, the colour of silver-sand, and reaching to the knee, with a dove-coloured waistcoat buttoned up to a strip of red tie, white flannel trousers, felt slippers, and the familiar crimson cap set far back on the head." The most rigorous simplicity marked all his habits. He rose and retired with the sun, at least in summer time, ate sparingly, and delighted in outdoor life. Until a few years before his death riding was his favourite exercise, and his coachman has said "that there never was a better rider."

He typed out for Mr. Stead in May, 1902, two quotations which seemed to him to express the highest thought uttered by man on the subject of religion. The first was from a speech of Abraham Lincoln, and is too long

for quotation; the second was from the Old Testament, "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before Him." On the sundial in the garden at Limnerslease was the motto of his life: "The utmost for the highest."

That was ever his watchword, and his life was worthy its nobility. It was characteristic of him that a daisy was his favourite flower, because "though a humble thing it looks up."

What is Inspiration?

"Inspiration," says Archdeacon Wilson, "is *an illumination in all that concerns Religious Truth.** It accepts the broad assumption that the progress of human thought, like Nature itself, is at once under the guiding control of a Providence, as well as subject to uniform laws. It assumes that Purpose and Design are not inconsistent with such laws; that they may be providential without being miraculous: it assumes that there is a human and divine element to be traced in the progress of humanity, an element of freedom and an element of control. The marks of the divine are permanence, continuity, and silence; of the human, they are variability, and intermittence and clamour. It assumes that we are not merely cunning beasts, but men with souls and longings far beyond our surroundings, with aspirations which witness to truth, and goodness, and God. It assumes that the power which created the human mind has followed up its action by continuous guidance. It accepts broadly the fact of God's providence over all nations, though we cannot read all His purposes. It does not hesitate to speak of a universal influence of God on the hearts of men ignorant alike of the name of Jehovah and of Christ; an influence which we may, if we like, call an inspiration, though we cannot define it or assign its limits. It is so great as to be illimitable. It asserts, on historical evidence, that the nation which has contributed incomparably the most important and most luminous elements to the religious thought of the world, by deed and life as well as word, is the Jewish nation; and that its books show a progressive advance from lower to higher, the effect of immutable truth on the growing range of human knowledge and experience; that they have a wonderful unity and purpose; and finally culminate in the revelation of Christ; that 'God spake at sundry times and in divers manners by the prophets, until at last He spake by His Son.'† It asserts that the Bible is unique: that whereas other books show an inspiration of intellect, and other men show an inspiration of inventiveness or skill or imagination, this book has shown a unique insight into morality and into the spiritual needs of man; that it is at once educational and redemptive. In a special and distinctive sense then it is inspired with profound insight into spiritual truth; it has been and is God's chosen instrument for guiding and educating the world. So explained, we may call this the theory of continuous divine inspiration; an illumination in all that concerns Religious Truth.

Do not imagine that the study of the Bible from a literary, critical historical point of view is incompatible with its use as the book of practical devotion, which enlightens the soul with its humble, prayerful, devotional study. Criticism and religion are compatible. While I welcome broadly the whole range of historical and critical and scientific investigation, and while I use it as an auxiliary to the growing comprehension of the book, yet I feel all the while the positive revelation made by God to man, the true inspiration of the Spirit of God speaking through the writers and through the writings, so profoundly as to be unshaken by any rationalistic arguments whatever."

Find that which you would lay down your life for, and you find that which will hold your soul in life for ever and ever. Find it in the present, and the light of your discovery will fall back across the past to reveal the deathlessness of every noble soul, and forward into the future to reveal how no one of such souls could live on alone, but must live in the likeness of Him who said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." — AUGUSTUS M. LORD.

* This paragraph is suggested by the book, *Catholic Thoughts on the Bible* (Strahan).

† Hebrews i. 1.

News from the Field.

As a rule August is an uneventful month in the life of our churches. Ministers, and many members of their congregations, are away seeking rest and revival by the sounding sea, or amid the silence of the hills, or in "quiet resting places" of the country side. Would that all of our ministers could have this yearly release! But the incomes of not a few are so scanty that a holiday is out of the question. When the butcher, baker, grocer, landlord, rate collector, shoemaker, and doctor have been paid a holiday is out of the question, and even a week at the seaside not to be thought of. We hear of ministers who have not had a real holiday for ten years. All the relief they get is to exchange a Sunday with a neighbouring minister. It is wonderful that our wealthy people do not more often give themselves the pleasure of maintaining a holiday home for the less fortunate brethren of the ministry. What are one or two conspicuous and blessed examples among so many? Only, dear wealthy friends, do the thing thoroughly if you do it at all. To expect a minister on an income of £120 a year to find a couple of pounds for a return ticket is to expect miracles. For the minister must not be divorced from his wife. Think what a month in the Lakes would mean for them both—so jaded, so dispirited, so care-burdened. A month freed from all pecuniary anxiety and spent in quiet, restful communion with nature! How the little chapel would feel the benefit of the brighter spirit, and the fresher outlook, and the invigorated body and mind.

But holidays or no holidays changes go on. The *Rev. Rudolph Davis*, after a ministry of eleven years at Evesham, goes to Bridgewater, having accepted the appointment of District Minister to the Western Union. Mr. Davis has done admirable work, not only at Evesham but as visitor of the Midland Christian Union and secretary of the Lay Preachers' Association. May success attend him in his new sphere of labour.

The cause at Richmond suffers a great loss by the resignation of the *Rev. Silas Farington*. The resolution adopted at the congregational meeting when Mr. Farington's resignation was accepted speaks of his services in the warmest terms, and he leaves with a lasting place in the affection of a devoted congregation. Mr. Farington will retire from the pulpit the last Sunday in October.

The *Rev. J. Morgan Whiteman* leaves Dewsbury, carrying with him the hearty good will of the Yorkshire Union, under whose auspices he has been working.

Induction services have been held at Mount Pottinger, Belfast, on the commencement by the *Rev. J. Worthington* of his ministry in that place, and at Pontypridd when the *Rev. Simon Jones* entered on his first ministerial charge. Impressive addresses were delivered on both occasions by *Principal Gordon*, and a large number of local ministers gave a cordial welcome to the new comers.

The *Rev. Andrew Doel* has resigned the Park Street pulpit, Chorley, and his ministry will close at the end of September.

The *Rev. J. Page Hopps* has kindly consented to take the Little Portland Street pulpit for the first three months in 1905.

Presentations have been made to the *Rev. John Ellis* by the friends of the Mansford Street Mission on his leaving for Yorkshire, and to the *Rev. S.* and *Mrs. Burrows*, of Dover, on the occasion of their wedding.

Three aged and honoured workers have passed away from us during the past month, *Mrs. Pocock*, of Manchester; *Mr. J. Greenwood*, of Bradford; and *Mr. John Jackson*, of Staleybridge. In each case our churches lose valued and honoured friends. May the vacant places in the ranks soon be filled.

The Jubilee Memorial Fund of the Home Missionary College has reached £11,000. Our friends wish for an additional £9000 to complete their scheme.

In letters to the *Inquirer* on "Our Churches," *Mr. Harwood*, who has had exceptional opportunities of informing himself of the conditions of our smaller churches, amid other sensible suggestions makes two which seem to us of very special value. The first is that in neighbourhoods where there are two churches, neither of which is able to secure a really able minister since it cannot give an adequate stipend, the churches should combine their forces and have one minister for the two places. It would be far better to secure half the services of a thoroughly efficient and trustworthy man than the whole services of a poor ineffective man. There are too many who are ready to go anywhere and take any stipend that may be offered in order to get a footing in the ministry, and they generally leave trouble behind them. The chances are that one man who is known, and trusted, and efficient, will do far better for both places than if they had each the kind of minister their stipend will secure The second suggestion is that new causes should be undertaken under the superintendence of experienced ministers, with the assistance of one of the younger men from college. To place a student fresh from college at the head of a new movement, with all its problems and difficulties, is obviously a great mistake. Let the new movement have the benefit of years of experience as well as the enthusiasm of youth.

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